IN THE CLAIMS

1 (Previously Presented).   A method comprising:

assigning, from a server, distributed computing tasks to a network of processor-based client devices;

estimating, at said server, based on a client device's resources, a time when the client device is to complete an assigned task;

determining, at the server, whether the task is completed after said time; and

if not, determining, at the server, why the task was not completed.

2 (Original).   The method of claim 1 including establishing a persistent connection between at least one of said devices and a server.

3 (Original).   The method of claim 1 including subdividing a distributed computing job into tasks and assigning each of said tasks to a different device.

Claims 4 and 5 (Canceled).

6 (Previously Presented).   The method of claim 1 including, if no results are received after the passage of said time estimate, querying said device.

7 (Previously Presented).   The method of claim 1 including automatically requesting results after the passage of said time estimate.

8 (Previously Presented).   The method of claim 1 including maintaining, from a server, the software on said devices.

9 (Original).   The method of claim 1 including receiving the results of said task from a device and providing an acknowledgement to said device when the results are received correctly.

2

10 (Original). The method of claim 1 including receiving a completion message from a device and automatically establishing an upload session to receive the task results.

11 (Previously Presented).   An article comprising a medium storing instructions that, if executed, enable a server to:

assign, from a server, distributed computing tasks to a plurality of processor-based client devices;

estimate, at said server, based on a client device's resources, a time when the client device is to complete an assigned task;

determine, at the server, whether the task is completed after said time; and

if not, determine, at the server, why the task was not completed.

12 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to establish a persistent connection between at least one of said devices and said system.

13 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to subdivide a distributed computing job into tasks and assign each of said tasks to a different device.

Claims 14 and 15 (Canceled).

16 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to query a device if no results are received after the passage of said time estimate.

17 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to automatically request results from said task after the passage of said time estimate.

3

18 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to maintain the software on a device.

19 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to receive the results of a task from a device and provide an acknowledgement to said device when the results are received correctly.

20 (Previously Presented).   The article of claim 11 further storing instructions that enable the server to receive a completion message from a device and automatically establish an upload session to receive the task results.

21 (Previously Presented).   A server comprising:

a processor-based device; and

a storage coupled to said processor-based device storing instructions that, if executed, enable said device to operate a managed network of consumer-use processor-based clients, assign, from a server, distributed computing tasks to said clients, estimate, at said server, based on a client device's resources, a time when the client device is to complete an assigned task, and determine, at the server, whether the task is completed after said time and, if not, determine, at the server, why the task was not completed.

Claim 22 (Canceled).

23 (Previously Presented).   The server of claim 21 wherein said server is a system management server.

24 (Previously Presented).   The server of claim 21 wherein said processor-based device has a persistent connection with at least one consumer-use processor-based client.

4

25 (Previously Presented).   The server of claim 21 wherein said storage stores instructions that enable said processor-based device to divide a distributed computing job into a plurality of tasks, assign said tasks to specific processor-based clients, and estimate the time to complete said job by said clients.

26 (Previously Presented).   The server of claim 21 further storing instructions to develop an estimate of the time to task completion.

27 (Previously Presented).   The server of claim 21 further storing instructions that, if no results are received after the passage of said time estimate, querying said device.

28 (Previously Presented).   The server of claim 26 further storing instructions to automatically request said results after the passage of said time estimate.

5